

T/502/3/56/98

H-BLOCK / ARMAGH BULLETIN

Issued weekly by the
BELFAST H BLOCK/
ARMAGH COMMITTEE

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april 23



A TIME FOR DETERMINATION

TODAY IS A TIME OF TESTING. As Bobby Sands lies near death, the British are pulling out all the stops to try to defeat the prison struggle. With their 'criminalisation policy' destroyed by Bobby Sands' election and the mass support, they are now trying to salvage what they can in terms of torture and death inside the prisons, and murder and mayhem on the outside. It is a time for the greatest vigilance, courage and level-headedness. The RUC's deliberate confrontations are designed to draw us off into a spiral of wrecking and burning in the hopes this will frighten people off the streets and diffuse the mass anger building up in the areas. The extent to which they are prepared to go was shown by the brutal murder of 2 teenagers in Derry.

But we must not be provoked. We must support for the prisoners. With their that we are prepared for the test of mination we must show the Brit-ers demands they won't be dealing rioting for a few days; they will anger that will sweep away the any hopes they have of main-

continue with cold determination to build lives in the balance, we must make sure strength that lies ahead. By our deter-ish that if they don't grant the prison-with a few hundred young people-be faced with an explosion of mass H-Blocks and Armagh, along with taining their dominance in Ireland.



HUNGER STRIKE DAY 54

PRISON REPORT

BOBBY SANDS' CONDITION on Wednesday was as follows:

'This morning Bobby Sands was visited by members of his family. Since last night [Tuesday] at 8 o'clock he has been unable to drink the water. His weight has now fallen to 47 kilos (7 stone, 5 lbs), a total loss of 2 stone, 9 pounds.

'He has constant headaches, and is having difficulty focusing. He had very few things to say to his family this morning other than repeating his determination to continue his fast and asking supporters not to forget about his three comrades on hunger strike, especially Frankie Hughes who is almost 40 days on hunger strike.'

The H-Block Information Centre has said that now that all four are in prison hospital, it is not as easy as before to get accurate accounts of weight loss and condition, but all three of the others; Frankie Hughes, Ray McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara, are now nearing a time of danger.

Short Strand held a successful roadblocking last Thursday, with over 100 people involved, despite being given 'five minutes to get off the road' by the RUC, who drove back and forth through the picket. On Tuesday, over 300 attended a march and rosary recital around the area, with the RUC again trying unsuccessfully to provoke confrontation.



radio H block

RADIO H-BLOCK will be broadcasting from Sunday at around the 200 metre wavelength on medium wave. Listen in for the latest news, of the prisoners and the campaign.

RUC BIGOTRY

ON GOOD FRIDAY Mary McKenna, her sister Nuala McKay, and their mother, all H-Block Armagh activists from the Colin area, were walking up Castle Lane having finished their Easter shopping, when reserve Constable Roberts came up after them and told Mary McKenna to remove her H-Block badge, and told her that failure to do so would lead to her arrest. Naturally, Mary refused.

He then radioed for a landrover and put Mary into it. When her sister tried to get information as to what section she was being arrested under, and where she was being taken, she was thrown bodily into the landrover and both sisters were taken to Musgrave Street Barracks, where Mary was charged with behaviour likely to cause a disturbance of the peace, and Nuala with obstruction.

Both women are appearing in Court on Monday morning, April 27th. BE THERE TO SUPPORT THEM.

COUNCILLOR "STUNNED"

ALLIANCE COUNCILLOR for the Twinbrook area, John Cousins, was canvassing his constituents on Wednesday, 15th April when members of the Twinbrook H-Block Armagh Action Group approached and asked him what he thought of the newly-elected M.P. Bobby Sands. He replied that he was absolutely stunned at the result.

The hunger strikers' supporters then asked Mr Cousins if he wouldn't now come off the Lisburn Council and support Bobby Sands. They pointed out to him that the people of Twinbrook supported Bobby Sands and that they would produce factual evidence to prove this. They asked Mr Cousins, when this evidence was produced in the form of a petition would he then come off the Council. He replied that he would seriously consider it.

This Tuesday night the Action Committee began a door to door canvass of the area, with the petition, and in less than 3 hours, covering only a portion of the estate, they had collected 2,000 signatures. They will be doing the rest of the estate in the next few days, and then intend presenting Cousins with the petition.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

AREA ACTIVITIES

Every night Turf Lodge picket of Fort Jericho

Thur. & Fri. All areas from Twinbrook to Divis/Lower Falls: 'White Line' picket, 8:30-9:30 a.m.

Thursday New Lodge Rally. 8p.m.

Short Strand public meeting, 8p.m. Inf.

Centre, Thompson Street. For all ex-POWs, relatives and friends of the prisoners.

Lenadoon March, 8 p.m. Assemble Horn Drive Community Centre.

Ballymurphy, Newhill, Whiterock/Westrock: Joint Rally, Ballymurphy Bullring. 7.30.

AREA REPORTS

INSTANCES OF HARASSMENT have been reported from many areas this week, with even more attempts to provoke peaceful demonstrators into riot situations. To take just a few:

Turf Lodge has been holding pickets outside Fort Jericho every night. Last Tuesday picketers were standing in a line with posters when 2 Saracens came out of the Fort 'at breakneck speed' and deliberately drove through the protesters, who all had to scatter to save themselves from being killed. The Saracens continued in this manner for the duration of the picket, trying to provoke a confrontation situation in what was organised as a peaceful protest in support of the hunger strikers.

New Lodge supporters coming back by car from the Dublin march on Saturday were P-checked after they ran out of petrol on the M1 near Lisburn, and held for ¾ of an hour. As they were being towed away afterwards by a car which they had phoned for, the bumper of the tow car came off. So when the two then left their car to get petrol, they came back to find that police had surrounded the car. Two were arrested, and held at Dunmurray Police station for another ½ hour, and after their release, were again stopped by the Brits at Kennedy Way, P-checked, and their car searched. One did not arrive home till 2.45 in the morning.

Ardoyne's Memorial Service on Tuesday was attended by 3,000 people from Ardoyne, the Bone and Ligoniel. All the speakers stressed the need to support Sunday's March.

In **Ballymurphy**, the **Mid-Falls** and other areas, Action Groups, ex-POWs and youth have been out painting over hoardings with H-Block slogans, and painting on gable walls. The results are very striking, particularly the one illustrated below from Ballymurphy.

TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES

TRADE UNION BRANCHES in England who support the five demands are making this known to unions here who won't get off the fence, in order to pressure them to change their position. The Belfast Trade Union Subcommittee ran off 5,000 leaflets at the weekend explaining the need to repeat the point made by the Day of Industrial Action, that workers in this area don't only care about pay, but are prepared to stand up and support the prisoners as well. These leaflets, calling on people to march behind their workplace or area banners next Sunday, were distributed on Saturday, and on Sunday before the massive Easter Commemoration Parade.

Among items discussed at the Trade Union Steering Committee meeting in Dublin this week was a trade union protest in Dublin. Southern trade union branches and workplaces will have their banners at that protest Thursday and the meeting will be addressed by southern and northern trade union activists.

The Belfast Trade Union Committee is holding a lobby outside the NICTU offices on Friday 24th at 2.00, at which a letter will be handed in, asking them to implement the resolution agreed at the 1978 Galway ICTU conference, by calling on the British government to allow the prisoners to wear their own clothes and have the right to substitute educational courses for prison work.



THE BELFAST REPORT

MOBILISING FOR SUNDAY'S MARCH took up most of the business of the Belfast Meeting Tuesday night, attended by 15 area committees and reps from the trade union group, the youth, students and the GAA.

As the Committee had stressed at Monday's emergency meeting in the BTA (and a similar one Wednesday night in Andersonstown), building for Sunday's March is to take the form of canvassing for an election — with teams of door-knockers and loudhailers going around every street in every area. Drivers, loudhailing equipment, posters and leaflets, as well as extra volunteers for any area without enough people to do the canvassing, are available from 85b.

On Sunday's march — arrangements were made for the platform, bands, stewards and transport. As well as the FTA, private taxi firms are being asked to give their support to getting people to and from the demonstration. Stewards will ensure that after the march priority in transport is given to those travelling back across town, to the old, and to people with young children. All areas who can supply stewards are asked to have them come along an hour before the march to the centre for a stewards meeting.

Letters are available at the centre to be given to GAA clubs, to clubs and to parish priests, asking for their support. The County Antrim Board is being asked to cancel their fixture in Casement Park on Sunday.

EMERGENCY ARRANGEMENTS

In the event that news becomes public of Bobby Sands being moved to *Musgrave* Park hospital arrangements have been made for an emergency demonstration to the hospital. These are as follows: If news of the move is out *before 1 p.m. on any day*, there will be a demonstration leaving from Dunville Park at 7 p.m. that evening. If news is out *after 1 p.m.* the march to the hospital will be the following evening. In either case, all committees are asked to contact the Hunger Strike Centre as soon as they hear the news.

FOR THE FUTURE

The meeting briefly discussed what was likely to happen in the event of Bobby Sands' death, or being moved to hospital. It was felt that whatever reactions happened, it was most important to go ahead with Sunday's march, because it is the *mass support* shown for the prisoners' demands which, combined with international opinion, and the prisoners' own determination, will move the British Government. With this in mind, it is vital that all committees continue their hard work of bringing the people onto the streets — and that there should be a minimum of activities which frighten them away — as the Brits are trying to do.

Another rally at the City Hall was discussed — and is to be taken back to committees for further discussion.

ONTO THE STREETS ON SUNDAY

SUNDAY'S NATIONAL RALLY may be the last chance in this campaign for Belfast to show to the world the support that exists for the prisoners' demands. Despite the immense amount of pressure we have generated, Thatcher is still refusing to move—even in the face of Bobby Sands' nearing death. On Sunday, we must give our answer to the British Government which is intent on killing more Irish people.

Internationally renowned speakers will be on the platform on Sunday, showing the broad spectrum of support we have behind us. These include a former Attorney General of the United States, Ramsay Clark, and Father Daniel Berrigan, himself imprisoned for his fight against America's imperialist war in Vietnam. Frank McManus, Co-Chairman of the IIP, and Tom Murray, the SDLP Councillor who signed Bobby Sands nomination papers will also be there, along with many others.

Our job is to get everyone physically capable of coming out to the march and rally on Sunday. We have only days to do this, just as Bobby Sands has only days to live. But with the support of the people, the prisoners' demands *can* be won. By our numbers on Sunday, we will show the British what they can expect if they do not concede.

NATIONAL RALLY

Sunday 26th April

— BELFAST —
**DUNVILLE PARK
TO BUSY BEE**
Assemble 2.30p.m.

57 DAYS OF HUNGER STRIKE!
STOP THE TORTURE

T/SOR / 3/56 / 98

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Issued weekly by the
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May 8th
No.13



A FITTING MEMORIAL

AT 1:17 ON THE MORNING OF TUESDAY, May 5th, the Irish people began one of the darkest, saddest days in the history of the recent struggle, when Bobby Sands after 66 days on hunger strike, died for his and his comrades just right to be classed as political prisoners.

As a young man Bobby and his comrades struggled not only in the prisons but in the streets of Ireland to achieve for the Irish people the age-old goal of self-determination and a united Ireland. Bobby Sands died for all of us.

Yesterday, as he was laid to rest, the world witnessed the might of the Irish people, with tens of thousands in a solemn, dignified funeral procession in sorrow and in support

of the 5 demands for which he gave his life.

But let us not forget that three other men — Frankie Hughes, Patsy O'Hara and Ray McCreesh suffering the agonising, painful fast to death. The tens of thousands who followed Bobby Sands' body to Milltown on Thursday must come out on the streets in marches and protests so that his death will not have been in vain, and so that others need not die.

In keeping with Bobby Sand's memory, we must now dedicate ourselves to ensuring that his memorial is the smashing forever of the H-Blocks, Armagh Gaol, and British rule in Ireland.



54 DAYS OF HUNGER STRIKE

Attacks on Hunger - Strike Campaign

THE HEAD OF THE RUC has been busy this past week announcing his plans for a 'low profile' by the police in the event of Bobby Sands' death. In reality, the RUC and the Brits have, since the beginning of this week, been doing everything in their power to provoke riots and injuries.

This policy has been coupled with raids in almost all nationalist areas, and wholesale detention orders on scores of people. And Jack Hermon complained yesterday that children were 'enticing' police and Brits into the areas!

The Association for Legal Justice has reports of a total of 180 arrests since last Sunday, 126 of them in the Belfast area. A father of 6 children, who is a single parent,

is being held under a 7 day order, as are many others. On Tuesday an 11 year old was arrested in the Markets area, and taken to Musgrave Street, where, totally illegally, his parents were not permitted to visit him. Another youth from the Markets, 15 year old Shaun Devlin, was taken from his home and his mother was not informed of her right to accompany him.

ROSARY PROCESSION ATTACKED

ON WEDNESDAY a large black flag procession headed down from the Busy Bee to Andersonstown Barracks, reciting the rosary.

The procession got as far as Eastwoods when army vehicles through them without warning, forcing the procession to move to the side of the road. Police landrovers then drove to the front and back of the procession. The doors were kicked open, plastic bullet guns pointed at the crowd, and without warning or excuse the RUC opened up on the crowd.

A mother of 6 children, Mrs Maguire of Bumbeg Park was hit in the face with a plastic bullet, and was rushed to hospital by ambulance. Two elderly men were also hit. Mrs Maguire was reciting the rosary at the time. She required 26 stitches in the face, and her neck is very badly bruised.

The doctor who attended her at the RVH, and who encouraged her to make a complaint, told her that if the bullet had hit her cheekbone her eye would have been shot out of her head by the force of the missile. Mrs Maguire told the doctor that she thought she was very lucky — and he replied 'would you call that luck — that hole in your face?

ON TUESDAY THE LOWER ORMEAU ROAD'S response to Bobby Sands' death — in the form of a picket — was dispersed by the RUC firing, without warning, plastic bullets into the crowd of men, women and children. Rioting followed. The next day another peaceful picket was organised where even more people turned out. The Ormeau Road area has been saturated by RUC, who have set up a base in the cricket ground in the middle of the community, and are operating an unofficial curfew by intimidating and beating up people in the area who venture out after dark. Nevertheless this small community resists them!

PETTY INTIMIDATION

Last Sunday the RUC came into the Highfield Club in Ardoyne, tore down every poster connected with the hunger strike, and also dismantled the illuminated H-Block sign outside the club. They also stole the Ex-POW and Youth banners. The Ardoyne H-Block Committee see this as a deliberate form of intimidation to keep activists off the streets, but say that these jackboot tactics will not deter the people of Ardoyne from supporting the hunger strikers and their comrades.

In Clonard on Saturday the Brits cordoned off the entire area, supposedly because of a bomb in the Blackstaff Bar, and refused to let people enter Clonard Monastery, while parking their landrovers on Church property. The UDR also parked in the Chapel grounds on Saturday night, and the whole area was cordoned off till 7 p.m. Sunday night.

A women's Action Group was formed last week in the Clonard area, to warn local residents of raids on their homes, and the women were on the streets for several nights from 11 p.m. to 8 a.m. Every woman in the group has been issued with a whistle. Any woman wanting to join the group should contact members.

The Belfast Committee would encourage areas to follow the example set during internment of following foot patrols around with bin lids and whistles, wherever possible.

YOUNG CHILDREN HIT

Several young children have also been hit with plastic bullets, in the stomach, head and legs, while a 20-year-old youth in the Mid-Falls area was hit in the leg with a live round.



Charges Dropped

CHARGES AGAINST TRADE UNIONISTS resulting from Saturday's May Day march organised by the NICTU have been dropped. When the eight defendants arrived in court this morning, the police prosecutor announced that on referral, the DPP's Office had decided that the charges would not stand up in court — even, we might add — in the biased courts of Northern Ireland.

The eight who were arrested for trying to raise the H-Block issue on the May Day march were manhandled by police and held from Saturday lunchtime till Monday morning without bail, on orders 'from on high' in the RUC. Their arrests were a blatantly obvious application of RUC policy to prevent any raising of the H-Block Armagh issue anywhere outside of the nationalist ghettos.

The case became a serious embarrassment to the NICTU bureaucracy after the police 'mistakenly' also arrested Ann Hope, Secretary of Belfast Trades Council, who was protesting at the arrest of a teacher for handing out leaflets to the march. The leaflets in question explained to marchers that ICTU policy on the prisons issue was that all prisoners should be allowed to wear their own clothes, and should not have to do prison work — policy which, if implemented by ICTU's active pressure on the government, would be a great help in winning the prisoners 5 demands.

The NICTU hierarchy, fearing that if the case ever came to court it would result in a political trial — with themselves in the dock along with the police — pressed the RUC for charges to be dropped. Except for full-time official Tom Gillen, a member of the 'Workers Party', who not only asked for charges to be continued, but volunteered himself as a prosecution witness.

All charges against H-Block activists who attempted to hold a peaceful, legal rally at Belfast City Hall on April 11th must now also be dropped, as these charges were a result of the exact same RUC policy of discrimination.

PRISON REPORT VITAL CONFERENCE

THE HEALTH OF FRANCIS HUGHES, RAY MCCREECH AND PATSY O'HARA CONTINUES TO DETERIORATE.

Francis Hughes can only see out of one eye, and the muscles or nerves in that eye are not functioning properly, so that he cannot turn the eye, but can only see straight ahead.

The prison authorities have used the fact that he is now completely bedridden to isolate him from the other two hunger strikers, so that in his isolated condition they can put maximum pressure on him to come off the hunger strike. The doctor attending him is colluding in this — warning him and the other hunger strikers of their near death, and telling them that they have already probably suffered irreparable brain damage.

AN EMERGENCY OPEN CONFERENCE has been called by the National H-Block Armagh Committee for this Sunday in the Lake Glen Hotel, starting at 11 a.m. Every group and individual prepared to give active support to the 5 demands is welcome to attend.

The purpose of the Conference is to get maximum unity of all the Irish people to win the campaign for the 5 demands now, without further loss of life.

If you or your group have any proposals to put to the Conference, these should be given in writing to 85b Falls Road by Saturday lunchtime. Invitations to the conference have gone out to political parties, cultural, sporting and social groups within the communities, and to prominent individuals.

Southern Workers React to Death

"Business life in many parts of the country came to a standstill yesterday, as thousands of shops, pubs, factories offices and schools closed to mark Bobby Sands funeral."

"In the centre of Dublin many shops and other business premises closed down, while an estimated 2,500 people marched through the city in driving rain."

So the Irish Times begins its comprehensive rundown of industrial stoppages on Thursday. Allowing for the fact that the numbers they quote are almost certainly on the low side, their account gives a very impressive picture of support in the South, much of it from places not very active before.

In the **Border** areas most towns closed down completely either from midday onwards or for the entire day. All over the country thousands of workers attended meetings and marches, some of them organised by local Trades Councils. The town of **Dundalk** came to a complete standstill and thousands marched to a rallying point where effigies of Charlie Haughey and Margaret Thatcher were burnt. **Monaghan** town closed down completely. **Cavan** saw the Gypsum workers (over 600) walk out, while in Castleblaney

the town was closed for the afternoon.

In **Donegal** there was very impressive support, with the Lough Swilly Bus Company closed down, Letterkenny completely shut and factories throughout the county coming out. In **Drogheda** factories, shops and offices closed, including the huge Irish Cement plant just outside the town.

In other parts of the 6 Counties **Sligo** saw one of the biggest demonstrations for years, with nearly 10,000 marchers and a complete closure of the town centre. All local factories closed, including the giant Snia factory. **Limerick** also came to a standstill as businesses and factories closed down while upwards of 4,000 marched through the centre.

The stoppage in **Waterford** was supported by the local Trades Council and there was a virtually complete shutdown. A parade was led by a lone piper and an empty coffin draped by a tricolour.

Navan Mines and Crannagh Co-op were among the many factories and business that closed down in **Navan**. There were also closures in **Ballina**, **Drumshambo**, **Ballinamore**, **Mohill**, **Carrickallen**, **Co. Leitrim**, and **Carrickallen** and **Carrick-on-Shannon**, **Co. Roscommon**. **Tralee** and **Killarney** were closed, and **Bray** closed for a half day.



RVH WORKERS marching to the hunger strike centre on Wednesday. They were among thousands who walked out during the week in Belfast, including DeLorean, Bass Charrington and Leisure Centre workers.

BELFAST REPORT

HOW TO CARRY ON WITH LARGE-SCALE peaceful demonstrations in this period is the question that has occupied most of the discussion time of the last two Belfast meetings. The problem was illustrated by the smaller attendance at these meetings — reflecting the difficulties of travelling out of the areas. The violent and provocative behaviour of the RUC and the Brits, combined with people's people's legitimate anger at the murder of Bobby Sands, have created a situation whereby the campaign has been in danger of becoming fragmented.

But last Tuesday's meeting, attended by almost all committees, agreed unanimously on the primary importance of keeping up the mass mobilisation, and further agreed on calling a march this Saturday (see ad for details).

Meanwhile, 'white-line' demos, barracks pickets, rosaries and any other activities areas can arrange are carrying on.

FINANCE STILL A PROBLEM

Finance is still a vital worry for the Belfast Committee. Particularly in a period when functions — which were a major means of fund-raising — have been cancelled in respect for Bobby Sands, and much normal activity has been suspended. The hunger strike centre has ballots available for two sets of Waterford Crystal, to be drawn on May 30. The money from the sale of these ballots, if fed back immediately to the Centre, will be a big help. Meanwhile, if any Committees are holding funds over and above the £100 limit set, these funds should be given in immediately.

Tuesday's meeting also decided to begin immediately a campaign of boycotts and civil disruption (see next column).

CIVIL DISRUPTION & BOYCOTTS

The Belfast H Block Armagh Central Committee calls on all supporters of the prisoners to begin immediately a campaign of peaceful disruption and boycotts designed to increase the pressure on the British Government to grant the five demands.

1. Don't buy British newspapers
2. Don't buy perishable British goods.
3. Use 'freephone' and 'freepost' facilities to make known your support for the prisoners.
4. Don't shop with British firms
5. Use telephones to jam the lines of government offices.
6. Picket or occupy government and city administration premises.

And **WHATEVER OTHER ACTS OF PEACEFUL DISRUPTION** are possible.

Taken individually these actions may seem trivial, but if carried out in a consistent continuing fashion they can seriously disrupt the workings of the British administration and cause serious loss of trade.

Belfast Central Committee 6 May 1981

**BLACK
FLAG
MARCH**



**SATURDAY
9 MAY 2P.M.
BUSY BEE
TO
DUNVILLE**

**In memory of BOBBY SANDS
and to carry on his struggle
and that of FRANKIE HUGHES,
RAY McCREESH and PATSY O'HARA.**